FRANK READE WEEKLY MAGAZINE,

Containing Stories of Adventures on Land, Sea & in the Air.

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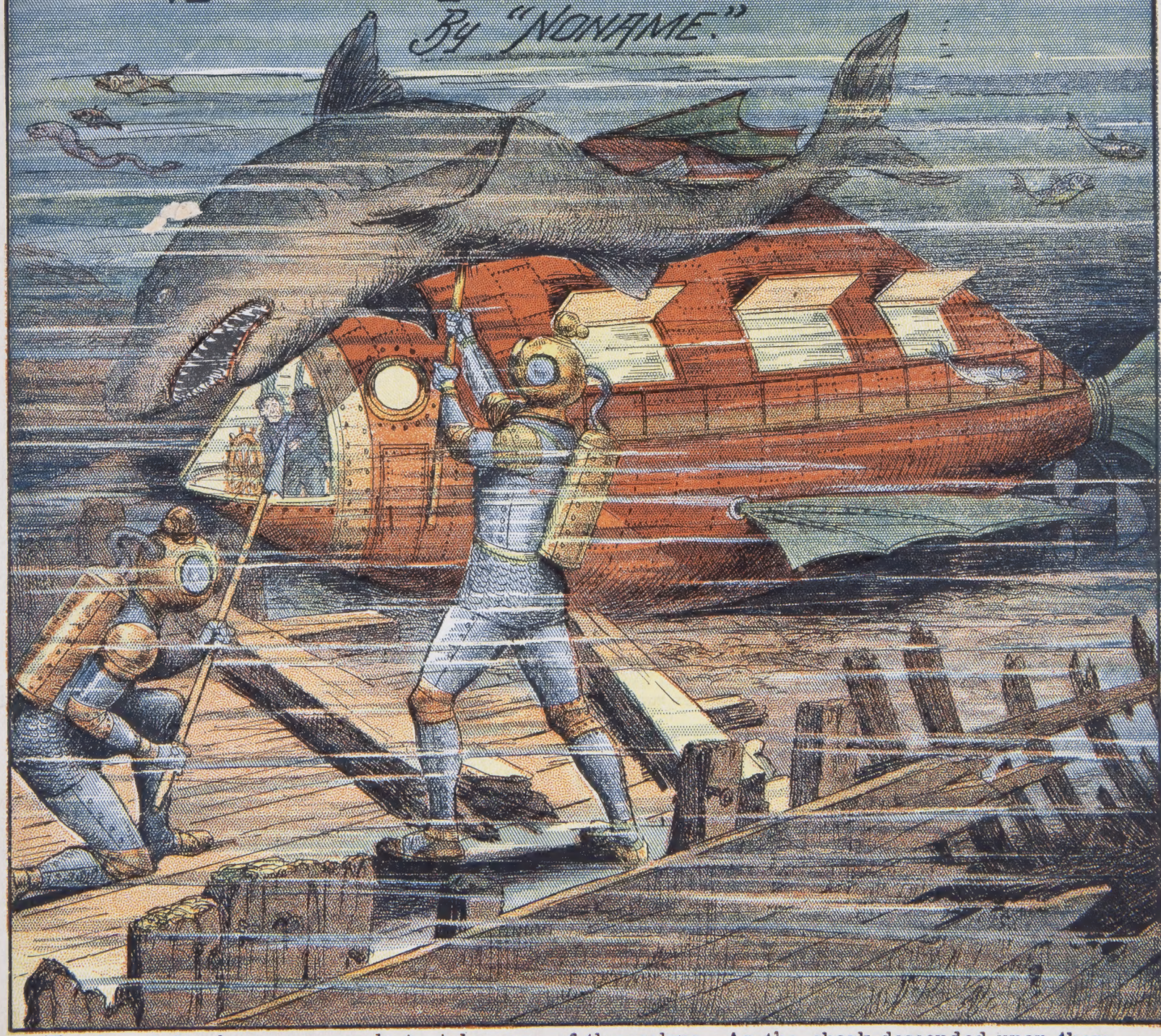
No. 44. NEW YORK, AUGUST 28, 1903. Price 5 Cents.

FRANK READE, JR.'S SEARCH FOR THE SILVER WHALE; OR, UNDER THE OCEAN IN THE ELECTRIC "DOLPHIN."

By "NONAME."



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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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CHAPTER I.

THE INVENTOR AND THE EXPLORER.

"A submarine boat? Do you really mean it, Frank? I trust you are not becoming mentally unbalanced with the success of your inventive efforts. Not content with the Electric Air-ship, you now meditate the construction of a submarine vessel."

"That is what I said, friend Stanhope."

"But, pshaw, man! Do you realize what an impossible feat that is?"

"I realize only that it is quite possible," replied the young inventor, imperturbably.

"And you are really in earnest?"

"As much as I ever was in my life."

George Stanhope, explorer and geologist, and a handsome, well developed American, of forty years, of varied experiences, sat quite still for a moment and studied the features of his companion.

This was Frank Reade, Jr., of Readestown, U. S. A., the most famous man in the inventive line of the present generation.

Despite his youth, he had brought to perfection some of the most wonderful and gigantic of enterprises.

At the moment the two men were sitting in the smoking room of the Southern Hotel in New Orleans.

It was while discussing various topics that the subject of the submarine boat was broached.

At once Stanhope was interested and incredulous.

He listened to Frank's theories for awhile, then began to express his incredulity.

And thus we find them arguing the matter at the opening of our story.

"You may be in earnest, Frank," said the explorer, with a laugh, "but I think you have tackled a pretty difficult subject. Don't you agree with me?"

Frank smiled.

"It is not so difficult to solve submarine navigation as aerial flight," he said; "there is enough in Nature to teach us how the problem may be accomplished."

"Ah, but it is impossible to always copy Nature."

"Yet we may draw our plans from her liberal sources."

In what way has Nature assisted you in your plan of submarine navigation?"

"She has given me a model."

"A model?"

"Yes."

"How is that?"

"In the salt water there swims a fish called the bream, or sunfish. He is at once the most buoyant and generally agile of fish. He will furnish my model."

"So you propose to model your boat after a fish?"

"Why not? All the necessary points may be obtained from the fish. For instance, I shall have in my boat a system of air reservoirs akin to the bladders of the fish, for the purpose of arising or descending, as necessity my require. Fins shall preserve the equilibrium, and a screw shall furnish the motive power. What more do I want?"

"How will you live without oxygen?"

"I shall have plenty of oxygen. I have already devised a system of electric and chemical generators which destroy the poisonous gases as readily as they create pure air. This will enable a perfect circulation to be kept up aboard the craft."

Stanhope drew a deep breath and knocked the ashes from his cigar.

You are too deep for me, Frank," he said, sententiously. "To use a slang phrase—I am not in it. I wish you success in your emulation of Captain Nemo."

"It is possible that I may fail," said the young inventor, consulting his watch, "but I shall endeavor to win success."

"I hope you may."

"I have now to leave to catch my train. I bid you goodbye."

"Wait!"

Stanhope seized Frank's hand.

"I want to ask a favor."

"Well?"

"When you get ready to start your submarine boat will you grant me permission to accompany you on the trial trip?"

"Have you considered the risk?"

"What?"

"Suppose it sinks and never rises?"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Stanhope; "do you think I am a soft head? Have I braved the life of the deadly jungle and the pestilential rivers of India to stand in fear of death in such a manner? Have I your permission?"

Frank shook the explorer's hand.

"Certainly," he said, warmly. "I shall be very glad of your company. I am going home now to begin work on my new venture. When it is completed I will wire you to come."

"That settles it!" cried Stanhope. "I will live in expectation."

"It may require many weeks to perfect the boat."

"All right. I will live in patience."

Thus the two men parted.

They were kindred spirits though each was cast in a different mold. The inventor and the explorer; how fitting it was that they should affiliate.

Stanhope proceeded at once to New York where he was to fulfill a lecture course on Africa.

Frank Reade, Jr., went straight to Readestown, where he at once closeted himself, and for several days was hardly seen.

When he emerged at length from his seclusion he had the plans of his new invention all perfected.

All that was necessary now was to construct the boat.

He a once conferred with his engineers and machinists. The result was that a large gang of skilled workmen were quickly engaged in the construction of the Dolphin, which was the name Frank gave the craft.

In some manner news of the projected boat leaked out, and it became known all over the country that Frank Reade, Jr., was about to present to the world the greatest triumph of mechanical science ever known.

Of course the whole country was agog with interest.

Frank had scores of letters asking various privileges, all of which of course he refused.

The weeks passed by and progress on the Dolphin was very rapid.

In Frank's employ were two peculiar characters. One was a red-headed Irishman of the Tipperary type named Barney O'Shea. The other was a comical darky of the old plantation species named Pomp.

Pomp and Barney were Frank Reade, Jr.'s most valued servants.

They had accompanied him on all his travels, shared dangers, hardships and triumphs with him.

They were deeply devoted to their handsome and accomplished young master, and clung to him closely.

They were delighted with the prospect of a deep-sea cruise.

"Begorra, I'll make love to the bootiful mermaids an' hobnob wid Neptune himself, bad cess to him!" cried Barney, gleefully. "Shure, it'll be foine sport to go a-fishin' for whales an' porpuses down there, naygur."

"Golly!" rejoined Pomp, as he threw a flip-flap, "I don' fink yo' want to fish much fo' whales, sonny! Dey pull yo' ober into de watah fo' suah!"

"How the divil will they do that, yez black ape?" roared Barney. "Don't yez see that we're undher wather anyway?"

"Mebbe dat whale swallow yo', den."

"Bejabers, he cudn't swally me an' ther boat, too, yez ignyramus!"

Pomp scratched his woolly head.

"Wha' dat yo' call me, chile?" he asked. "Am I a lily igglylamus? I done fink dat yo' call me somefin' else afo' I get froo wif yo'. Ki dar!"

And Pomp made a rush for his colleague. They closed in a lively wrestle.

While the warmest of friends, both were addicted to the habit of practical joking. Each loved to play pranks upon the other.

"Begorra, yez haven't got the sand to trow me off me feet, naygur!" roared Barney, as they wrestled. "Whurroo! Over yez go!"

But as Pomp went down he brought Barney also, and thus the unequal struggle went on.

It was terminated finally by the appearance of Frank Reade, Jr., on the scene.

Finally the last bolt was driven, the last rivet cut, and the Dolphin floated in the waters of the big tank, completed.

Then Frank sent a telegram to New York, worded thus:

DEAR STANHOPE,—The Dolphin is finished. If you wish to participate in the trial trip, report at once. Shall expect you by Thursday sure. Please reply. Yours ever,

FRANK READE, JR.

Promptly Stanhope appeared in Readestown Thursday of that week. He went at once to the machine shops.

He found Frank there awaiting him. They shook hands warmly.

"You are on hand promptly," said Frank, "but I think I can give you a great surprise."

"Then the submarine boat is an accomplished fact?"

"Yes."

"I am curious to see the great wonder."

"You shall have your wish gratified."

They left the office and went at once out into the yard.

Frank led the way to the tank, an immense affair with a depth of forty feet, sufficient to float a war cruiser.

This tank, or artificial pond, was connected with a deep canal by a gate and locks.

Passing through the canal, the river could be reached in a short while, and thence a course was open to the sea.

In the tank floated like a cork the beautiful triumph of a mighty inventive genius, the submarine boat.

It was truly a beautiful specimen of marine architecture, though totally unlike the general run of sea craft.

There were no sails or visible means of propulsion. No high decks or bulwarks, but a hull wonderful in its symmetry.

The Dolphin was built much upon the lines of the salt water bream, and was as buoyant and light as could be desired.

Stanhope stood upon the edge of the tank for some while regarding the new craft with interest and wonderment.

Then Frank advanced and said briskly:

"Well, George, what do you think of it?"

The explorer was silent a moment; then he said:

"It looks feasible from here."

Frank laughed heartily.

"You must come aboard," he said, "and then I think your doubts will forever be set at rest upon that point. Are you quite ready?"

"Oh, yes," replied Stanhope.

"Then follow me."

CHAPTER II.

STANHOPE IS SATISFIED.

Frank Reade, Jr., led the way aboard the Dolphin without further delay. A portable platform extended along the side, which was provided with a handrail.

Frank explained this.

"You see this is provided with joints and hinges," he said. "When the boat gets into motion this is easily folded up against the side of the boat, making the hull smooth, so that it offers no resistance to swift passage through the water."

In the hull was cut a door, which opened by pressure upon an electric spring.

Its existence might never have been suspected at a cursory glance. The section of windows along each side were the same.

The body or hull of the Dolphin was composed of thin plates of steel closely riveted together. They were tough and capable of resisting a great pressure.

The hull was especialy constructed for descending to great depths, where the pressure was liable to be very great.

The stern of the Dolphin was shaped like the broad tail of a fish. Beneath it was the rudder and screw propeller.

Lateral fins served to keep the boat's equilibrium.

Forward were two huge bull's-eye windows in which were set powerful searchlights.

In general this was a description of the exterior of the Dolphin. They now passed into the interior.

Passing through the door, which could be hermetically sealed in an instant, if necessary, they stood in a sort of vestibule.

A door led into the cabin. Here Frank paused and said:

"This is the vestibule. By its means one can leave the boat while it is under water."

"Leave the boat while under water!" exclaimed Stanhope in surprise. "How on earth can you do that?"

"Easily enough," replied Frank. "I have a diving suit with a storage tank and a generator connected with the helmet. By its means I can travel anywhere under water."

"A diving suit!"

"Exactly."

"That will do. But how can you open the door to leave the boat without flooding it?"

"By means of this vestibule."

Frank placed his hands upon a stopcock; then he continued:

"If you wish to leave the boat, you enter the vestibule from the cabin, presuming that your diving suit is on. You close the cabin door behind you, open this valve, the vestibule fills with water. You open the outer door and walk out. When you wish to return, simply enter the vestibule, close the outer door, then press this second valve. At once the water is pumped out of the vestibule by pneumatic pressure. When it is empty you may safely enter the cabin. See the idea?"

"Very simple," agreed Stanhope; "but very ingenious. Lead on."

They now passed into the cabin.

This was a literal revelation. The famous explorer gazed upon the scene with the deepest of admiration.

"I am captivated!" he declared. "It exceeds my most sanguine hopes. Frank, it is grand!"

The young inventor was much pleased with this rhapsody.

"I thought you would like it," he said.

The cabin was furnished with the elegance of a fashionable salon. Expensive furnishing and draperies played their part.

Along the walls of the cabin extended the tubes of the generator which supplied the boat with pure air while under water.

These and the generator were examined curiously by Stanhope. Then they passed on into the living compartments of the boat, and thence to the engine-room.

Here was all the delicate electric machinery which furnished the motive power of the boat.

It was carefully inspected, as well as the mechanism of the reservoirs which regulated the descent and ascent of the Dolphin.

Then Frank led Stanhope to a neat little stateroom with a luxurious couch and said:

"These are your quarters, George. I trust they will suit you."

"Well, I should say so!" cried the explorer. "You are too kind to me, Frank. This will be the greatest treat of my life."

"Now," said Frank, "I will demonstrate to you that the Dolphin is a submarine boat."

"That is all that is left to be done," said Stanhope: "You have verified everything else."

"When I have proved to you the ability of the boat to travel under water, then will you be satisfied?"

"Perfectly."

Frank shouted to Barney, who was forward in the pilothouse.

"Barney!"

"Ay, sor!" replied the Celt.

"Press valve No. ten, and switch off lever No. six."

"All roight, sor."

"Valve ten will hermetically seal every door and window," explained Frank; "then lever six will open the sinking reservoir and we will go down."

"Good!"

"If you are at all doubtful of the result, you shall witness the trial from the shore."

"Never!" cried Stanhope, forcibly.

"All right, George."

Suddenly the light in the cabin faded. There was a sinking sensation and all was deep gloom.

Then Frank shouted:

"Press key four, Barney."

The Celt obeyed.

Instantly there was a flood of light in the cabin. Electric globes blazed in various quarters, and illumined the bottom of the tank as the boat reached it.

There was a gentle shock, and then the window shutters slid back. A fine view of the bed of the tank was had.

Stanhope gazed upon the spectacle with interest and wonderment.

He breathed as freely and regularly as ever, and the chemical air of the boat seemed fully as good as that of the upper part of the world.

For fully half an hour the boat remained at the bottom of the tank. The generators were a complete success.

Then Stanhope said:

"I am satisfied, Frank, that one could live indefinitely under water with your generator."

"I am glad of that," said Frank. "Now I will prove to you that the Dolphin can travel under water."

This time Frank stepped into the pilot-house, and took the wheel. He pressed a key, which set the propellers in motion. Then the Dolphin glided forward.

Round and round the tank went the submarine boat.

Stanhope's last doubt was removed. He caught Frank's hands and wrung them.

"Enough!" he cried. "The submarine boat is a success. It will be the wonder of the world. Let us be off."

"For the ocean?"

"Yes."

"But," said Frank, thoughtfully, "we ought to have some object in view."

"I have one."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Come with me and I will tell you."

The Dolphin had returned to the surface and lay along the side of the tank. Stanhope led the way from the boat and thence to the office.

Then he threw himself into a chair which was drawn up to a table.

Frank seated himself opposite.

Stanhope drew some papers from his pocket. He spread them out.

"You will see that this is a chart of the Pacific," he said. "Here is a point westward from the Aleutian Isles which I have marked."

Frank noted this.

"Now," continued the great explorer, "I have a very strange story to tell you of this part of the sea.

"The story was given me by Captain Barclay, of the brig Helen, of San Francisco. It sounds like a fairy story.

"The Helen had left Calcutta six months previous and was in these waters through force of circumstances, having been blown thither by a terrific hurricane of a week's duration.

"This had brought them into sealing waters. As the brig had run short of provisions, Captain Barclay decided to kill some seals for meat.

"Accordingly the boat was ordered out. The seals were quite plentiful, and it was easy to shoot them in the water, and by quick work secure them before they should sink.

"The boat's crew were thus engaged when suddenly a thrilling thing occurred.

"It was a catastrophe wholly unlooked for and resulted most seriously for at least one member of the crew.

"This was Albert Tucker, the first mate, who was thrown far from the boat by a sudden shock. Some heavy body struck the boat and smashed it. In an instant the crew were struggling in the water.

"All but Tucker succeeded in getting upon the overturned long boat, and were rescued later by a relief party from the ship.

"Tucker's fate was fearful. He was struggling in the water one hundred yards to leeward, and every man on the wrecked boat could see him, when an immense white body rose from the water.

"It was a tremendous whale of the very rare silver or white species. It rose close to the swimming man. We saw its huge mouth open, and then—Tucker disappeared from view.

"Now, the white or silver whale, so called, is really a tremendous species of shark.

"Of course all knew that Tucker had been swallowed by the monster. They feared for themselves, but the creature did not venture to attack them."

Frank had listened to the narrative with interest, but he said:

"That is a thrilling story. But how can we do Tucker any good now?"

"We cannot, of course," replied the explorer. "But I have not told you all yet. There is an under plot."

"Indeed!"

"You see, Tucker was no ordinary man. A year previous he and his brother Valentine were prosperous in business in San Francisco. One day, Valentine had trouble with a bookkeeper in his employ and discharged him.

"Albert was a bachelor, but Valentine had a family, a happy wife and small children.

"The bookkeeper, Alden Vance, had threatened Valentine's life, and the fact was well known that the feeling between them was not of the pleasantest.

"Vance was extremely dissipated, and had for a crony a low-browed ex-gambler, Duncan Crane. Thus matters stood when San Francisco one day was startled with a fearful horror.

"Valentine Tucker, going home from his business late one night, heard an awful cry of human agony from a narrow street near by.

CHAPTER III.

THE VOYAGE BEGUN.

"Valentine Tucker was a man of impulse and never hesitated when he knew that a fellow being was in distress.

"He rushed into the street in time to see one man fall and another skurry away in the gloom.

"Feeling sure of foul play he knelt over the prostrate man and felt for his heart, as he did so his hand closed upon the handle of a dagger.

"With a sense of horror, not knowing what he did, he pulled it from the wound. The red blood dyed his sleeve and arm.

"Before he could rise to his feet and sound an alarm, lights flashed about him and he was in the grip of officers of the law.

"Caught thus apparently red-handed, the crime was fastened upon him. There seemed no way for him to prove his innocence.

"Furthermore, the fact that the dead man was Alden Vance was decidedly against him. He was thrown into prison, tried and convicted of murder.

"It was an awful fatality. At once the business so prosperous declined, and Albert was forced to retire at a heavy loss But he was faithful to his brother.

"He avowed his intention of proving his brother's innocence. There was no one upon whom suspicion could fall save Duncan Crane, who had disappeared.

"This fact was the saving of Valentine's life. In view of the possibility that Crane might be implicated, the judge was lenient, and commuted the sentence of death to life imprisonment.

"Of course this was little better than death, but it gave Albert his chance.

"He at once started upon the track of Crane. To Hawaii, to Yokohama, he tracked the wretch.

"Here the real murderer was stricken with the plague. Upon his death-bed he made full and absolute confession.

"It was duly written out and witnessed by the American Consul. Armed with this proof of his brother's innocence, Albert started for home.

"He was happy in the thought that his brother would be vindicated upon his arrival in San Francisco.

"But alas for his hopes. Fate had decreed that the confession should never get there. It was upon his person when devoured by the silver whale.

"Valentine yet lingers in prison; his family are starving. Now you have the whole sad story. I know you are a Christian and a philanthropist, Frank. You will agree with me that we ought to do something to right this great wrong if we can."

Frank had listened to the thrilling story with the deepest interest.

Now he said in a puzzled way:

"Well and good, George; but how can we do it?"

"Capture the silver whale."

"Capture the whale! What earthly good will that do?"

"We can, perhaps, recover the confession."

Frank whistled in surprise.

"Why, how absurd!" he exclaimed. "It much have become absorbed long ago in the whale's stomach. In any event the creature has no doubt long ago been captured and destroyed."

"No," said Stanhope, firmly; "I do not believe that. I have heard of the silver whale many times since. Numerous whaling captains have reported it in parts contiguous to the locality where poor Tucker met his fate. I believe with this submarine boat we can pursue and capture the silver whale."

"Very well; but the confession——"

"It was folded and kept in a metal box or case which Tucker wore in his belt. It could not be absorbed, and I have seen objects of metal many times taken from the stomach of a whale."

Frank's face lit up.

"So it was in a metal case."

"Yes."

"Then there is a chance!" cried the young inventor, springing up. "George, I am deeply interested. If the silver whale is yet in existence, we will run it down and recover the confession, if possible. It at least affords us an object for our submarine voyage."

"Correct!" cried Stanhope. "I knew you would grasp the idea, Frank."

"We will at once start for the North Pacific. Have your effects ready."

"They are all ready!" declared Stanhope. "I have explored every country upon the face of the earth. Now it is my happy privilege to explore the bed of the sea. Am I not a lucky man?"

"Begorra, Misther Frank," cried a rollicking voice from the yard. "We have ivery bit of provisions aboord, an' shure it's all ready to start we are!"

"Good!" cried Frank. "There shall be no delay on my part. We will be off at the quickest possible moment."

Stanhope at once went out and telegraphed Mrs. Tucker in San Francisco.

DEAR MADAM,—We start very soon in the submarine boat Dolphin for the North Pacific in quest of the white whale. Let us hope we shall find the evidence to clear your husband. Be of cheerful mind. GEORGE STANHOPE.

The remainder of the day was spent in completing the preparations for the start.

The next morning all was announced in readiness.

The Dolphin floated in the tank all ready for the start.

The voyagers went aboard, and Frank gave orders for the big gates to be opened. This was done, and the boat floated into the canal.

Here it was in plain view of the great crowd which was waiting outside to greet it with cheers. The Dolphin floated down the canal toward the river.

Soon it was in the current of the larger stream, and then Frank started the electric engines to greater speed.

This sent the Dolphin ahead at a lively rate and Readestown began to fade from view.

All of the voyagers were upon the main deck by the open door of the pilot-house. Frank was at the wheel.

"Take a good look at Readestown," said the young inventor. "It may be your last one!"

Instinctively Barney and Pomp turned.

"Begorra, it's the foinest spot on earth!" cried the Celt. "May we live to return to dear old Radestown!"

"Golly! I done fink dat we mus' do dat," averred Pomp. "Dis chile neber gwine to leabe his bones in no oder place!"

"Don't yez be too shure, naygur," declared Barney, shaking his head. "Shure, it's many a close call we'll be afther havin' yit, me lad. There's no spendin' a year or more at the bottom av the say widout some bit av a risk."

"You are right, Barney," said the explorer, Stanhope; "but we are going to look upon the bright side of this thing. We shall sail the North Pacific, capture the silver whale, return and see old America again in safety. Mark my prophecy."

"I hope you have hit it right, George," laughed Frank; "at least you are right in looking on the bright side."

So the submarine voyagers left home in quite a cheerful frame of mind.

But they little dreamed of the thrilling experiences which the near future held.

They had no means of guessing the terrible perils through which they were to pass.

A voyage under the sea can scarcely be attended by aught but danger and risk.

Readestown was soon left out of sight.

The Dolphin sped on down the river current to the sea. Thus far Frank had kept the boat on the surface.

When the open sea was reached he said:

"I think that for the first thousand miles of our course we will travel faster under water. I have studied the ocean bed, and there are no obstructions to encounter at the proper mean elevation."

"Then we are to start out at once with a thousand mile voyage under water?" asked the explorer Stanhope.

"Yes."

"Good! I am very glad of that. There is much in the Atlantic worthy of study. You will make the Pacific by way of Cape Horn?"

To Stanhope's surprise Frank shook his head.

"No," he said. "That is the longest route."

"What other is there?"

"By the Northwest Passage."

Stanhope was surprised.

"Why, man," he exclaimed, "that has never been discovered. It does not exist!"

"Yes, it does," averred Frank, "but it is never navigable to surface vessels, owing to its being choked with ice. But the Dolphin can go under the ice."

"Under the ice?"

"Exactly."

"Wonderful!" cried Stanhope, excitedly. "I never thought of that. It is certainly the nearest way to the North Pacific. We shall pass into Behring Sea?"

The Dolphin was already out of sight of land, and headed northward. She was a fast sailer, and rode the waves like a duck.

Frank now decided to begin his submarine voyage. He went into the pilot-house and pressed a lever.

Instantly every door and window was hermetically sealed and the electric lights were turned on full force.

The Dolphin took a plunge beneath the surface.

Down it went until the glare of the electric lights revealed a rare and wonderful scene.

There were marine plants of queer and beautiful sort, cliffs, crags and reefs of vari-colored coral, thousands of fish of all hues and shapes, and many other strange and marvelous things.

The voyagers were for a time enchained by this wonderful exhibition.

Particularly was Stanhope enchanted, and he was anxious to possess some of the wonderful specimens that he saw.

"How can I get some of that lovely coral, Frank?" he cried. "It is a species I never saw before."

"There is only one way," said Frank.

"And how is that?"

"Simply put on a diving suit and go out there and get them."

"Can I do that?"

Before Frank could answer a startling and terrible thing happened. A cry of terror came from Barney.

The Celt had been in the pilot-house and chanced accidentally to press the motive valve. Instantly the Dolphin darted forward like an arrow.

Barney gripped the valve and tried to shut off the current and check the awful speed of the boat.

But he was unable to do this. For some reason or other the valve stuck and would not move.

No harm would have been done had the boat been a fathom higher in the water, as there was no obstacle which she could not easily have passed.

But a moment later there was a terrific rending shock. Every one was thrown from his feet.

The Dolphin came to a dead stop, and for an instant all was darkness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUNKEN WRECK—THE SHARK.

The crash had for an instant broken the current, but the light quickly flashed up again.

The electric engines were whirring like a top, and seemed likely to go to smash. But Frank Reade, Jr., was almost instantly upon his feet.

He rushed into the engine-room and checked them. The screw ceased its mad and useless revolutions.

The Dolphin had struck something.

This was certain. But fortunately no breakage or puncture of the hull had occurred, so there was no danger of death by drowning like rats in a trap.

The Dolphin was motionless in her position.

Barney pulled himself out of a corner. Pomp crawled out of a heap of furniture, and Stanhope emerged from a closet into which he had crashed.

Nobody was hurt, but there were bruises and scratches galore.

However, no one but was anxious to know the cause of the catastrophe.

Accordingly all rushed into the pilot-house where Frank was focusing the searchlight. This revealed the true state of affairs at once.

The obstruction into which the Dolphin had crashed was nothing more nor less than the sunken frame of a decayed vessel, half buried in the sands.

The nose of the Dolphin had become so firmly wedged in the timbers that it was held fast.

"Begorra, it's stuck fast we are!" cried Barney, rubbing a bruised shin. "Shure, Misther Frank, we'll niver pull out av that!"

"That is so, Frank!" cried Stanhope; "how can we ever extricate ourselves?"

"We can try," said Frank, laconically.

The young inventor carefully examined the position of the submarine boat. To his great joy he saw that she was unhurt.

Though she was tightly wedged in the debris of the wreck, there was no visible damage done her.

Frank hardly believed it possible to withdraw her from the wreck with the aid of the screw alone.

Yet he was constrained to make the attempt.

So he went into the engine-room and started the motor upon the reverse. The screw revolved furiously; the engines were exerted to their utmost.

But all in vain.

The electric boat could not be drawn from her position by hook or by crook. The situation was dubious.

Stanhope looked grave.

"How is it, Frank?" he asked. "Are we done for?"

The young inventor laughed.

"I think not," he said. "We shall find a way out of the scrape."

"But how?"

"I cannot explain now."

All but Frank looked serious. The young inventor did not seem in the least perturbed.

He went forward again and more closely studied the position of the Dolphin. Then he returned.

"Barney," he said, "bring me that case from the forward cabin in which are the diving suits."

"All roight, sor."

Away went the Celt upon his errand. He presently returned with a heavy box upon his shoulders.

This was deposited upon the cabin floor and opened.

From it Frank took a diving suit, helmet and all.

He proceeded at once to don it.

"You are going to leave the boat, Frank?" asked Stanhope.

"Yes."

"May I ask the privilege of accompanying you?"

"If you wish," replied Frank; "but my purpose is to saw away the timbers which hold the Dolphin's nose."

"I can help you."

"Yes."

At once Stanhope proceeded to don another suit. Soon both were attired, ready to leave the boat.

Frank armed himself with a pike and saw, as did Stanhope.

Then they entered the vestibule. It quickly filled with water, and a moment later they were able to emerge and walk upon the bed of the ocean.

Frank walked around the Dolphin and inspected its position. Stanhope remained upon the opposite side.

Then Frank mounted the timbers over the Dolphin's bow,

and began work with his saw. He worked away with all his might to sever the heaviest timber which held the head of the Dolphin.

It was no light task, for the timber was of stoutest oak, but Frank kept steadily at work.

As soon as he was able to accustom himself to the pressure of the water, Stanhope joined him.

Both labored for fully an hour, and then the last timber was sawed, and there was no doubt but that the boat could easily float away from the wreck.

The Dolphin was saved, and the party could once more go forward upon its submarine journey.

Stanhope endeavored to speak to Frank. But of course the young inventor could not hear him.

However, Frank guessed from his actions that he was endeavoring to do this, so he advanced and placing his helmet close to Stanhope's, shouted:

"Do you wish to speak to me?"

The words sounded to Stanhope far, far distant, but he understood them, and replied:

"Is this the only way we can make ourselves understood?"

"Yes."

"You think that the Dolphin is now able to be removed?"

"Oh, yes."

"I am glad of that. Shall we return to the cabin now?"

"Unless you wish to conduct some research. If so, this is your chance."

But Stanhope replied:

"I think I will defer it until another time."

"Very well."

Frank turned to clamber down from the wreck, but even as he did so he caught sight of a deadly peril.

This was in the form of a huge body which he saw suddenly loom up in the water not far distant.

It was, as he saw at once, a species of shark, and a monster in size. The creature had seen them and was moving toward them.

Frank saw that there was not time to reach the cabin before the monster would be upon them.

For that he meant to attack them was a moral certainty.

The young inventor gripped his companion's arm in warning. Stanhope saw the terrible peril.

Instinctively he drew the pike from his belt and stood on his guard. The shark, with a lightning-like movement, described a parabola about them.

Frank knew that they might expect a downward attack from the monster.

As it would have to turn upon its back to seize them, the opportunity to strike a defensive blow would be good.

And now came the attack.

The shark came down from above like a thunderbolt. Those on board the Dolphin saw this and were powerless to act.

"Be me sowl! It's a divil av a shark afther thim!" cried Barney. "An' shure there's no way to help thim at all, at all!"

"Golly, but dey jes' be all killed!" screamed Pomp. "Don' yo' fink dar be nuffin' we kin do?"

"Divil a bit!"

Frank and Stanhope were ready to take care of themselves.

As the shark descended upon them both crouched low.

The creature's open jaws were not four feet from Frank when he buried the pike in the shark's body.

The shock knocked him over, and he rolled upon the deck of the sunken ship. Stanhope made a blow at the fish, but missed it.

The monster flashed by like a meteor, and once again shot up to make a fresh attack.

But the blow given it had told.

The water was full of blood, and the shark writhed as if in pain.

But once more it came down.

Over upon its back it rolled. The horrid jaws were wide open.

This time it had not the strength to come as swiftly as before. Its movements were sluggish.

And this gave Stanhope his chance to deal the monster a blow.

Also Frank thrust his pike into the shark's body. It was the finishing stroke.

The monster made a convulsive leap upward, beat the water furiously, and then sank quivering but dying to the ocean bed.

The struggle was over. Man had triumphed over brute. The divers were the victors in this terrible battle.

No time was wasted in returning to the cabin of the Dolphin.

Frank and Stanhope were both much exhausted with the struggle, and both were glad to get their diving suits off.

Barney and Pomp welcomed them effusively.

"Begorra, Misther Frank!" cried the Celt, "shure I was shakin' in me skin fer yez! But I niver yit seen yez outdone!"

Frank laughed at this.

"It was a close call, Barney," he declared; "but we were lucky enough to pull out of the scrape."

The Dolphin's engines now were reversed, and she easily pulled out of her predicament.

So far as could be seen, she was not seriously injured.

The spirits of the voyagers revived greatly, and the boat now went on its way rapidly.

But some one was constantly at the wheel. No chances were taken now.

The searchlight threw its radiance for a full mile ahead. This enabled all obstructions to be seen and avoided.

The Dolphin proved wonderfully stanch and seaworthy. But at times her sides would creak and groan, which was an indication that she was at too great a depth. Then it would become necessary to raise her to a point where the pressure would not be so tremendous.

To attempt to describe in detail the wonders witnessed by the crew of the Dolphin each day would require many volumes.

Northward she kept for weeks, and then all became conscious of the fact that they were getting into Arctic waters.

Frank repeatedly studied his chart, and took note of the formation of the ocean's bed.

One day he declared:

"We are in the upper waters of Baffins Bay and under the ice. Above us it must be twenty feet in thickness. If any accident should happen to the Dolphin now we could never hope to reach the surface. We should be buried forever in these lonely depths."

It was an appalling thought, and the voyagers exchanged glances.

The words had barely left Frank's lips when, as if to emphasize his declaration, there came a stunning crash and the Dolphin seemed likely to turn completely over.

CHAPTER V.

BATTLE WITH A WHALE.

Not one in the party but was hurled to the deck. But each gained his feet quickly.

"My goodness! We are lost!" cried Stanhope.

But one thought was in Frank's mind. He believed that the Dolphin had run against a reef.

Pomp had been in the pilot-house. It was a remissness in duty upon his part if such was the case.

But now from the pilot-house came the terrified cry:

"Oh, Marse Frank, for de lov' ob goodness, cum yere quick!"

Frank was not slow to respond.

He rushed into the pilot-house to find Pomp hanging to the wheel The boat seemed to be flying.

"What is the matter? What did you strike?" shouted Frank.

"Didn't strike nuffin', sah. Somefin' struck us, an' it was de berry bigges' fish eber dis chile see!"

"A fish!" exclaimed Frank.

"Yas, sah! Jes' look ober yonder."

Frank had reversed the motive key, and the Dolphin had come to a stop. Dead ahead, in the glare of the searchlight, was a monster body.

What Pomp had called a fish Frank instantly recognized.

It was a monster whale.

The cetacean, with the curiosity and pugnacity of its species, had boldly attacked this giant invader of its deep sea home.

Full tilt it had rushed upon the Dolphin. Only the buoyancy and strength of the submarine boat had saved it from being crushed like an eggshell.

Even now it seemed to be preparing for another dash at the Dolphin. Frank saw this.

He instantly started the engine and whirled the boat about so as to meet the whale head on.

The Dolphin had a ram, and if the whale should come in contact with this it would be a serious affair for him.

And the sea monster seemed inclined to accept the challenge.

One moment it hung there in the current; then it lowered its head apparently, and made a convulsive movement with its mighty flukes.

"It is coming!" cried Stanhope, excitedly.

This was true enough.

Instinctively all braced for the shock which they knew must come.

Frank opened the lever wide. The Dolphin darted forward like lightning.

But the whale, wary as its kind always are, and uncertain, suddenly took a lightning-like downward plunge.

The ram of the Dolphin barely scraped its back. The shock threw all off their feet, but no further harm was done.

Instantly Frank sprang to the wheel and whirled the Dolphin about.

He knew what to expect, and this was that the whale would return to the attack from a new quarter.

Indeed he could already see the monster turning to carry out this plan.

The Dolphin came about just in time; the whale once more faced its leviathan opponent.

This time the cetecean did not seem inclined to avoid the collision. It bore down full tilt for the Dolphin.

Frank instantly started the engines.

Then came the collision.

It was a most terrific one.

The ram struck the whale square in the forehead. It glanced and plowed its way through the monster.

The whale was instantly killed, but the submarine boat was now in a fix. The ram was immovably fixed in the flesh of the huge monster.

This was really a serious matter. In vain Frank tried to back the boat away.

The engines were not powerful enough to extricate the ram.

It was firmly fixed.

And now the buoyant body of the whale began to rise. Being greater in lightness than the Dolphin, it took it along with it.

Up toward the surface went the boat and fish.

Frank knew that the surface of the ocean was frozen solid. They would not come to open air, but in contact with the ice above.

And this was just what happened.

There was a sudden jar, and the boat and whale rested against the surface of ice.

Under ordinary circumstances this might have done no damage.

But the current now began to drag the boat and whale along the surface of the ice forcibly.

It was powerful at this spot, and Frank saw that something must be done, or much damage would be done the Dolphin.

The young inventor was for a moment at a loss just what to do.

Then an idea occurred to him.

They were scraping along the ice violently. Frank went below and brought up a curious-looking object.

It looked like a small pontoon boat, but something after the pattern of the Dolphin.

But Stanhope recognized its nature at once.

It was a light torpedo, and could be discharged from a shaft just aft the ram in the bow of the boat.

"A torpedo!" exclaimed the great explorer. "Are you going to use it, Frank?"

"Yes."

"But——"

"What?"

"Is there no risk? May it not do us more harm than anything else?"

"I think not," replied the young inventor. "This is a very light one, and the charge I think is not strong enough. If it will dislodge the whale that is the best we may ask."

"Most certainly; but do you think it is sufficient?"

"We can only try."

"That is right."

Frank went forward and placed the torpedo in the tube.

This was operated by pneumatic pressure, but the force of expulsion was great enough to send it a long way.

Frank now fired the tube. The torpedo shot forth and struck the whale in its side. The result was instantaneous.

There was a shock. The Dolphin reeled and the water boiled about her. Then as it cleared it was seen that the monster had been literally blown in two pieces.

The ram was almost liberated, and as the air bladder of the fish was broken it now began to sink.

Frank now rushed back to the cabin.

Quickly he donned his diving suit. Stanhope, seeing the risk, tried to remonstrate with him.

But Frank did not listen; he left the cabin and was quickly out upon the deck.

He crept along until well out on the ram. In his right hand he carried a keen hatchet.

It was the work of but a few moments to cut away the section of blubber, and the boat was free.

At once it began to sink.

Frank crept back into the cabin safely, and into the overjoyed arms of his companions, who were indeed glad of his success.

"That was a plucky thing to do, Frank," cried Stanhope.

But the young inventor only smiled.

"There are more difficult things," he declared; "there was no other way."

But the Dolphin had now reached the bottom again. She was unscathed by her thrilling experience.

Frank now started her ahead upon her northward trip.

The further north they proceeded, the more shallow grew the ocean.

Many curious things were seen.

One day, as the boat was driving along at a lively rate, Barney, who was in the wheel-house, saw an object dead ahead.

As it was in the course of the boat he checked speed. Drawing nearer slowly he focussed the electric light and received a startling surprise.

At once he cried:

"Whurroo! Misther Frank, wud yez cum here, sor?"

Frank at once responded.

"What is it, Barney?"

"Shure, sor, it's a ship!"

"A ship?"

"Yis, sor. Sunken under the wather, sor. A rale ship, sor!"

At once Frank was interested. He gazed out through a dead-eye window, and saw that Barney was right.

There in the path of the Dolphin was a sunken ship. It was full rigged, and had apparently gone down with all sails set.

What was more, it was a whaling vessel, as its blackened funnels and high bulwarks attested.

"A sunken whale ship!" cried Frank.

Stanhope heard him.

"Is it?" he cried. "Mercy! What a sad fate!"

"But the Arctic holds many such."

"You are right. Shall we stop to search her, Frank?" asked the explorer.

The young inventor shook his head.

"I think not," he replied. "It will be hardly worth while. Besides, we must make this Northwest Passage before the Arctic winter sets in."

The Dolphin now entered a labyrinth of channels and straits.

Only a master mind like Frank Reade, Jr.'s could have emerged successfully from this tangle.

But he succeeded, and one day, after a long threading of such passages, he appeared in the cabin with a startling declaration.

"We have made the Northwest Passage and shall soon emerge into the Behring Sea. We will before many days be in hot pursuit of the silver whale."

Stanhope sprang up and swung his cap excitedly.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "That is a great achievement in more than one sense. We have proved the existence of the Northwest Passage, which has been a subject of such doubt among mariners for hundreds of years."

"You mean that we have proved the existence of the passage, but not that it is navigable," said Frank.

"Ah, but it is that!"

"I fear not!"

"And why not?"

"There is every indication that it is perpetually blocked with ice. No vessel could find its way through."

"Yet we did."

"You are caught!" he said. "We will allow that it is navigable for a submarine boat. But only think! Very shortly we shall be in quest of the silver whale!"

"Let us hope that we shall succeed in finding him," cried Stanhope, hopefully. "And also the confession which will save Valentine Tucker."

"Amen to that."

The Dolphin plowed the waters of the Behring Sea. The frightful cold of the Arctic waters now began to lessen.

It was evident that they were nearing the warmer waters of the Pacific. And in due time the Aleutian Isles were passed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ENGLISH SHIP.

The Dolphin had made a wonderful trip.

Under water for so many hundreds of miles, under Arctic ice, and through the least known parts of the ocean she had safely come.

Truly the voyagers had good reason to congratulate themselves upon the success of their undertaking.

But the really thrilling experiences of the voyage were before them, though they little realized it.

Into the North Pacific they made their way, and even into those latitudes which it was believed were frequented by the wonderful silver whale.

Plenty of whales had been seen, but all were of the common variety.

The random quest had now begun, for it could be little else. There was no way of guessing the locality of the silver whale.

The creature might swim those seas for years and not be encountered by those in quest of it. But Frank hoped for better luck.

At any moment there was the chance of coming across it.

At the first opportunity Frank hoped to capture it. And thus the Dolphin cruised aimlessly about.

Of course she cruised on the surface most of the time, for here was where it was believed the whale would be quickest seen.

Every distant spouting whale was run down, only to find that it was a common whale.

At length even Stanhope began to lose courage.

"We ought to get a glimpse of his whaleship soon," said Frank one day, after weeks of useless quest. "Is it not very strange?"

"Indeed, I think so," said Stanhope. "Yet I believe the time is near."

"You have good courage."

"Which is my good fortune."

"Indeed, that is so. An ordinary man would have given up the quest long ago."

"I dare say."

But one day Barney remarked:

"Sail ho!"

This cry caused a little ripple of excitement. Frank answered:

"A sail is it, Barney?"

"Shure, sor, it is!"

"Whereaway?"

"Dead to windward, sor."

All went upon the platform deck of the Dolphin with glasses and viewed the distant vessel.

She carried a cloud of canvas, and was evidently a fast sailer.

"Upon my word!" cried Stanhope, "she looks like one of the old-time Indiamen or tea wagons!"

"You are right," agreed Frank. "But it can hardly be so. What would she be doing in these waters?"

"She may have been blown from her course."

"Begorra, mebbe she's wan av thim fast English cutters what comes around here poaching for Ameriky's seals!" cried Barney.

Stanhope gave a start.

"I guess you've hit it, Barney," he cried. "There is little doubt of it."

"Shall we hail her?" asked Frank.

Stanhope hesitated a moment.

"If I thought we should gain any information of value," he said, "I would certainly be in favor if it."

"It shall be so. We can no more than try."

Frank went to the wheel-house and headed the Dolphin for the distant ship. Barney went to the upper deck with a flag.

The cutter was a fast sailer, but the Dolphin easily overhauled her. The actions of the ship were very queer. She was evidently trying to run away from the Dolphin.

For some moments Frank was puzzled.

"This is queer," he exclaimed. "She seems to be afraid of us."

"Perhaps she thinks we are some sort of an American war cruiser," ventured Stanhope.

Frank saw the truth at once.

"Correct!" he cried. "Then our only way it to get within hailing distance."

For miles the chase went on. The cutter spread every inch of canvas, but the Dolphin overhauled her.

When not one hundred yards astern of the big ship Frank mounted the forward and highest deck.

He had a speaking trumpet, and shouted:

"Ship ahoy! What ship is that?"

The captain evidently saw that to attempt to run away from the fleet Dolphin was sheer folly.

The rigging was crowded with sailors. These began to reef and haul, and the ship came around to her helm.

Then the captain himself appeared in the shrouds.

"Ahoy!" he shouted.

"Ahoy!" replied Frank.

"This is the English cutter, Southampton. Who are you?"

"The American submarine boat, Dolphin," replied Frank.

"Ship of war?"

"No; a private vessel. And we are in these waters upon an important errand. We seek information from you."

This announcement had an electrical effect upon the cutter's captain.

The announcement that the Dolphin was not a war vessel changed the complexion of things at once.

Down came the big sails of the Southampton, and the captain shouted:

"Come alongside. I'm glad to meet friends in these lonely waters. I'll help you all I can."

"That's the way to talk," said Frank. "I'll go aboard."

"Will yez have the Dolphin's boat, sor?" asked Barney.

"Yes," replied Frank. "Get it out as quick as you can."

The Celt needed no second bidding.

He and Pomp were quickly at work. The boat was out in a jiffy. Frank turned to Stanhope.

"Do you want to go with me?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the other, eagerly.

They stepped into the light craft and rowed away over the dancing waves.

A moment later they were ascending the gangway of the Southampton.

The captain met them at the head of the stairs. He was a genial-featured son of Britain.

"I greet you, gentlemen," he said. "I am Theodore Briggs, captain of this ship."

"I am Frank Reade, Jr., captain of the Dolphin," replied Frank. "This is my friend, Mr. Stanhope."

This formality over, the captain of the Southampton led the way to his cabin.

"You will share my hospitality," he said. "A glass of old Madeira."

The wine was good, and at once established good feelings.

After a few cursory remarks, Captain Briggs ventured to ask:

"In your hail, Captain Reade, you vouchsafed the statement that I could help you. I should be pleased to know in what way?"

"Certainly," replied Frank. "But first let me tell you a strange story."

Then he recited the object of their mission in these seas, and dwelt particularly upon the sad fate of poor Albert Tucker.

Captain Briggs listened with the deepest interest.

When Frank had finished, he said:

"Your tale interests me much, Captain Reade. Perhaps I may be of assistance to you."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Frank, eagerly.

"I have seen this white or silver whale. It is no myth, but a reality. Not twenty-four since it blowed not fifty yards from our quarters. We tried then to harpoon it, and chased it for some ways. But it was too wary."

"That information is of the utmost value to me!" cried Frank, joyfully. "For I know that the strange whale is yet in existence. It is hardly likely that there are two of the species in this vicinity."

"I am glad, then, if I have been of service," said the captain, warmly.

"Indeed you have."

"Can I aid you in any other way?"

"I thank you, but I think not. I will at once start the chase for the monster. I hope to make his acquaintance soon."

"I hope you will, and that I may know the result of your attempt."

"You shall."

Frank went on deck and was escorted to the gangway. The captain of the Southampton was a master of politeness.

He greeted Frank warmly.

But at this moment a great cry went up.

"There she blows—the silver whale!"

Instantly all eyes swept the sea.

"Whereaway?" shouted Captain Briggs.

"Two points to leeward!"

There was no disputing the fact. There in plain view upon the surface of the sea, its white sides glistening in the sunlight, was the silver whale.

The excitement on board both vessels was most intense.

The sailors of the Southampton excitedly filled the shrouds. For a moment Captain Briggs and Frank gazed at the monster without being able to speak.

Then Frank made a start for the gangway. He was about to leap down into the boat with Stanhope, when Captain Briggs placed a hand upon his arm.

"We will help you!" he cried. "I will lower boats, and we will capture the monster."

"I thank you," replied Frank, hastily; "pardon my sudden departure."

Then he dropped into the boat beside Stanhope. Barney and Pomp, on board the Dolphin, with wonderful sagacity, had started the engines so as to lessen the rowing distance.

"Quick, George!" cried Frank. "We must get back to the Dolphin as soon as possible. There is no time to lose."

"You are right," cried Stanhope, as he bent to the oars.

The light boat literally flew through the water. In less time than it takes to tell it, they sprang aboard the submarine boat.

Barney drew the boat aboard and secured it. Pomp had already started the Dolphin in pursuit of the whale.

Frank was quickly in the pilot-house.

He grasped the wheel, and then the boat shot forward like a flash. The Dolphin was a very speedy craft.

The whale would have been quickly impaled on her ram, but at that moment it seemed to take a sudden freak and dived.

Down it instantly went out of sight. Frank was for a moment chagrined.

But he instantly took active measures to pursue. He pressed the reservoir valve and the Dolphin sank.

Down for a hundred feet she went.

Frank did not believe that the whale would dive deeper than this.

With the descent of the Dolphin Frank instantly pressed the electric valve.

Instantly the sea for a great radius about was illumined.

Frank saw the distant form of the whale racing before the light like mad.

The young inventor instantly set the pace.

On through the water went the mad flight of pursuer and pursued.

It was indeed hard to say which held the advantage.

The whale seemed to hold its own by gyratory motions which it was difficult for the Dolphin to follow with accuracy.

CHAPTER VII.

CHASING THE SILVER WHALE.

But still Frank believed that the Dolphin was gaining.

He entertained one fond hope.

This was that the whale would turn and show fight. He knew the inherent pugnacity of the species.

But it did not.

For some reason or other it chose to hold its erratic course. To attempt to overtake it was impossible.

Frank saw this, but yet hoped that some turn of fortune would aid him. The chase came to a termination, though, in a peculiar way.

Suddenly the whale vanished as quickly as though dispelled into mist. Frank fancied that it had taken a turn at right angles.

He instantly slackened the engines. The Dolphin was coming about when she found herself immersed in a cloud, which even the electric light could not penetrate.

Nothing could be seen in any direction. All was blackness. It was an astounding turn of affairs.

"Great heavens!" cried Stanhope. "What has happened?"

The Dolphin was at a standstill, preparatory to coming about.

For an instant Frank did not know what to do.

Which way had the whale gone? What did the sudden wave of darkness mean?

The answer came almost instantly, and in a startling way.

Suddenly at the pilot-house window there loomed up a giant face, as full of deviltry and cunning as ever was seen.

It had a hawk-like beak, cruel jaws, and eyes round and cat-like. Great arms, adorned with curious feelers of spongy material, completely enveloped the hull of the boat.

In that instant all recognized the nature of the creature.

"An octopus!" screamed Stanhope.

It was truly one of that monster variety of cuttlefish or octopus which inhabit the depths of the Pacific.

The black mist in the water was now easily explained.

The octopus possesses a bag filled with an inky fluid which it dispenses through the water upon the approach of danger.

Frank was filled with horror and dismay. Not that he feared the attack of the octopus, but it was the means of his losing track of the white whale.

The arms of the octopus held the boat securely. Its ravenous beak beat furiously against the cabin window.

Of course its strength was not sufficient to break it, nor could any harm be done the Dolphin.

But it was a question of no light sort as to how they were to release themselves from the clutches of the monster. Of course this must be done before they could hope to proceed.

"What a shame!" cried Stanhope. "We have now lost track of the silver whale."

"It is hard luck," agreed Frank.

"We must make the best of it."

"Of course. First to get rid of this encumbrance and then to go on."

Frank Reade, Jr., was not the one to be puzzled by a contingency of this kind—at least, he could not be baffled.

He had soon hit upon an expedient.

From the engine-room he had procured a long coil of wire; then he donned some rubber gloves and connected the wire with the dynamos.

Enough of the current could be thus furnished to kill a dozen men.

Frank handled the wire carefully.

The feelers of the octopus were pressed against the steel frame of the pilot-house. Frank made a clever circuit, throwing the current suddenly into the steel frame.

The effect was electrical and fatal to the octopus.

It received the whole charge of a number of thousand volts. At once its huge arms relaxed, and it sank back.

The Dolphin was freed from its encumbrance, and now could go ahead with ease.

The inky cloud which had obscured the water had now become dispelled. The searchlight's rays flashed everywhere.

But the silver whale was nowhere to be seen.

It had made good its escape. Once more it was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

Certainly the outlook was discouraging. But Frank Reade, Jr., had the right kind of pluck.

He would never give up while there was a certainty that the silver whale was in existence.

"We will find him again!" he declared. "Possibly he is even now not far off."

"Perhaps on the surface," ventured Stanhope.

"Exactly."

Frank touched the lever, and the boat instantly rose to the surface. As it came up into daylight every eye scanned the sea.

Everywhere was the unbroken expanse of rolling brine. Only one object was visible, and that was a white sail far distant on the horizon.

That it was the ship Southampton was probable.

"Shall we rejoin her?" asked Stanhope.

"I think not," replied Frank. "Nothing will be gained. Let her go her way. We may work better alone."

So this was the last seen of the English cutter. Her sails were soon invisible.

For some while the Dolphin traveled on the surface of the sea. Then Frank decided to go down.

So the Dolphin descended once more to submarine depths.

For a whole day she kept on thus. Then, as night was coming on, the object of the quest was again seen.

The silver whale was floating lazily in a growth of submarine plants not a quarter of a mile distant. It did not seem conscious of the approach of the Dolphin.

Frank was in the pilot-house.

The young inventor instantly brought the Dolphin to a stop. He had decided this time upon more cautious tactics.

He was determined to make sure of his game this time.

He allowed the Dolphin to float gradually nearer to the monster.

Stanhope was with him in the pilot-house.

The explorer watched Frank's tactics with great eagerness.

"You have given up the idea of trying to run down and ram the whale?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Frank. "I am going to try a different game."

"Torpedoes?"

"Yes."

Frank took a torpedo and went forward. He placed it in the tube. Drawing a careful line on the whale, he pressed the pneumatic lever.

There was a recoil and a muffled report. The torpedo had sailed through the water apparently in a straight course for the whale.

Had it struck the cetacean it would have proved its end. But unfortunately this was not the case.

The torpedo just passed over the body of the whale. Gliding fifty yards beyond it struck a reef, and exploded with terrible force.

For a few moments the water literally boiled in the vicinity.

The whale shot forward like a stone from a catapult.

One moment it was visible flying in the distance.

Quick as thought Frank saw his mistake and acted.

He sprang into the pilot-house and pressed the motor key. The boat shot forward like a flash.

Straight after the whale it went. One moment the latter was visible. Then a great wall of blackness loomed up and the whale vanished.

Not recognizing the nature of this trick, and fearing a dangerous obstacle, Frank pressed the lever forward and brought the boat to a stop.

"Great Scott!" cried Stanhope, excitedly, "it is a big submarine cave, Frank."

"A cave!" gasped the young inventor.

"Certainly. A cave under the sea. The whale has gone into it."

This was certainly the truth.

Frank was greatly surprised. He gazed into the mouth of the cavern in amazement.

It extended far into the bowels of the earth.

Frank brought the searchlight to bear upon the inner regions of the cave.

A wonderful sight was revealed.

It seemed to be carved out of a stone which was emerald-like in color and broken into various conformations.

The sight was dazzling, and the explorers gazed upon it spellbound.

"Begorra! but it's a beautiful sight!" cried Barney, with mouth agape. "Did any av yez iver see the loikes av it?"

"Indeed, it is grand beyond anything I have ever seen!" exclaimed Stanhope.

But Frank was the first to recover from the spell of wonder upon the party.

He was looking for the whale.

It had vanished into one of the labyrinthian passages and left no trace behind it.

How far this extended none in the party could guess.

But the Dolphin was able to penetrate some distance into the cavern, for the arches were high.

For what seemed like an interminable distance the Dolphin threaded its way into the depths.

Frank was hopeful, even sanguine, that the silver whale was at last entrapped.

Of course there was the possibility that it had escaped by some other outlet. In this case it was no doubt by this time far away.

But Frank pressed forward as far as the size of the Dolphin would admit.

Then the sides of the submarine boat collided with the walls of stone. It could go no further.

Here was a predicament. The voyagers exchanged puzzled glances. What was to be done?

Frank was thoughtful. Stanhope paced up and down nervously. Barney sputtered and Pomp fumed.

"Begorra! I niver see the bate av it!" cried the Celt; "that whale is loike the divil's own. He do be squeezing out av the smallest holes I iver see!"

"Golly, but I done fink he am got away now fo' suah!" rejoined Pomp. "It am a drefful shame we didn't shoot it wif dat torpedo!"

"Bejabers, it's a hoodoo yez are, naygur!" declared Barney, unable to restrain giving Pomp a jab.

The darky shook his woolly head.

"Yo am drefful smart, Mistah I'ish," he retorted. "If yo' don' look out yo' might die young."

"Begorra, I'll surely die afore this voyage is out if yez bring us any more such luck, yez omadhaun!"

Barney's bantering manner was like a red flag in the eyes of a mad bull to Pomp.

"Don' yo' call me any sich names ag'in, sah, or by mah soul I done gib yo' de worst trashin' yo' eber had."

"Whurroo! Mebbe yez had betther thry it!" howled Barney, dancing about like a dervish, and all ready for a ruction.

It began to look as if one would occur.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONFESSION FOUND.

But before the controversy could be brought to an issue or a decision a thrilling thing occurred.

A terrific yell escaped Stanhope's lips.

"Look out!" he screamed, "for your lives, everybody! Take care!"

Frank Reade instantly sprang forward. The explorer was in the pilot-house window.

He gripped a section of the partition, and with one finger pointed ahead down the pathway of electric light.

There was the whale coming like a meteor head on for the Dolphin.

It had evidently been to the extreme end of the passage, and turning, was now making a mad charge for the enemy in its path.

Fury personified was the silver monster, as with wide open jaws it came straight down for the craft.

But Frank quickly pressed the lever and set the engines in motion. It was just the contingency he wished.

He realized that the game was already bagged.

If the whale struck the ram of the Dolphin its fate would be sealed. This was beyond dispute.

On like a meteor came the monster.

There was a brief flash of silver in the glare of light, then a stunning shock.

It seemed as if the Dolphin would go to pieces.

Portable objects went crashing about the cabin.

But when the boat once more became still and all had recovered from the terrific blow, a startling sight was revealed.

The whale had struck the ram head on, and the keen steel projection had literally split the monster to its vitals.

Glancing along the course of the jaw, the ram had cut the whale half in two.

It was as dead as a door post. The famous silver whale was no more.

Perhaps the most excited of the party was Stanhope.

The famous explorer could hardly contain himself.

"Hooray!" he shouted. "We have carried out our project! The game is won!"

"And the silver whale is ours!" rejoined Frank.

"You are right, Frank. Now, the next thing is to investigate its stomach and see if the metal case can be found."

"It shall be done."

Preparations were at once made to carry out this plan. The diving suits were donned, and all equipped themselves with sharp knives and pikes.

It was a critical time, for all depended upon the success of this attempt to find the metal case containing the confession.

Of course, there was only a slight possibility that it had remained intact in the whale's stomach.

There was the likelihood that other substances had long since corroded and consumed it.

In that case Valentine Tucker must continue to languish for the crime of which he was not guilty.

All that could be done would then have been done. At least the party could console themselves with this thought.

Work was at once begun dissecting the stomach and intestines of the whale. It was no slight task.

It was necessary to proceed with the utmost caution and care. Every little shred, every cell was carefully looked into.

But as the inspection progressed it became more and more certain that the metal case was not among the contents of the stomach.

Some foreign substances were found. A pewter cup, a knife worn dull, and what looked like a marling-spike, but so consumed that it could hardly be identified.

Certainly the metal case was not among the contents of the stomach. It looked as if the theory and the enterprise had signally failed.

The divers sat down for a moment to rest.

They were deeply disappointed.

Conversation was out of the question, for one could not make himself heard except when the helmets were placed close together.

But as they sat there the water current lifted a part of the lining of the whale's stomach and deposited it across Stanhope's knee.

He was about to brush it away when something caused him to halt. Instantly he lifted the shred of flesh and membrane and passed his hand over it.

There, grown into the lining, was an object a trifle larger than a man's hand.

From outward appearance it looked like a tumor growth, but Stanhope's fingers detected the hard substance underneath.

He knew well enough that it was quite possible for objects to grow into the lining even of the human stomach.

A wild, eager hope seized him.

Instantly he drew the blade of his knife across the membrane. An object slipped out.

It was rusty and corroded, but in the glare of the electric light it was not hard for him to recognize its character at once.

It was the metal case.

Stanhope held it up with insane gestures. Frank, Barney and Pomp saw and understood.

Instantly all started for the cabin of the submarine boat.

They were quickly aboard, and once the diving suits were off Stanhope yelled with glee:

"Hurrah! We have succeeded! Here is what will save the life of Valentine Tucker! It is an act of Providence!"

The corroded case lay upon the cabin table.

Frank looked at it.

"Do you believe this is the particular case?" he asked.

"It is hardly likely that there is any other," replied the explorer.

"True, but——"

"What?"

"It has been a long time exposed to destructive agents. Perhaps the papers inside are consumed."

Stanhope had thought of this. There was a light of anxiety in his eyes, but he said:

"We will hope for the best. Let us know our fate."

The hermetical sealing of the case was yet intact, and rendered doubly so by rust.

It was quite impossible to open it without destroying the case itself. But Stanhope did not hesitate to do this.

He struck the metal a hard blow.

Instantly the case parted. To the delight of all, a crisp, folded paper rolled out.

It was covered with writing, and was as intact as the day it was placed there.

At the bottom of the confession was the name of Duncan Crane, and also that of the witnesses. The evidence was complete.

Stanhope was the most delighted man in the world.

He carefully gathered up the remains of the metal case and the papers and placed them securely away. Then he declared unctuously:

"I am ready for anything. What joy I shall bring to the sorrowing wife and stricken husband!"

"I hardly think their pleasure will be greater than yours," said Frank, with a laugh.

"Very true," agreed Stanhope; "this is the happiest achievement of my life, I can tell you."

The remains of the silver whale were left in the cavern. The Dolphin backed out and into the open sea.

Then Frank touched the lever and she flew up to the surface.

All around was the unbroken expanse of sea.

To the horizon line it extended almost in a dead calm. But as the voyagers went out on deck to enjoy the bracing air, Stanhope cried:

"Sail ho!"

It was easy to locate the sail just below the line.

It was rising rapidly, and they were evidently in the vessel's course.

What the character of the craft was it was not easy as yet to tell.

But most of the party reckoned that it was the Southampton, until after it had become more plainly visible.

Then it was settled beyond all doubt that it was not the English cutter.

Curiosity impelled all to wish to learn the character of the strange vessel.

So the Dolphin headed toward her.

Every moment the two vessels drew nearer. Then Frank, who had been studying the unknown vessel through a glass, declared:

"It is a brig of the first class and she has not yet sighted us. We are, however, directly in her course."

"Shall we wait and speak her?" asked Stanhope.

"I think we will."

"Is it not curious that she has not sighted us yet?"

"I think not. You see, our boat rests so low in the water that she would be easily overlooked."

"Exactly. I have great curiosity to know what vessel this is, and what her mission is in this out-of-the-way part of the world."

"We shall soon know."

Nearer every moment drew the unknown vessel.

And now it was seen that she had sighted the Dolphin.

This was made manifest by a gun fired from her bow.

The Dolphin could not answer save by displaying a flag. This was, however, recognized.

Nearer the two boats drew, and soon the brig was in speaking distance.

It was seen that she floated the American flag.

Her appearance was, however, a mystery, for she did not have the bearing of either a whaler or a trader.

But the mystery was soon solved.

"Ahoy!" came from the brig.

"Ship ahoy!" replied Frank.

"What craft are you?"

"The submarine boat Dolphin, of Readestown, U. S. A."

"Submarine boat?"

"Yes."

"Jewhittaker! What kind of a craft may that be?" came back the astonished query. "Not for sailing under the sea?"

"Yes," replied Frank, "just for that. What ship are you?"

"The ship Belden. Captain Uriah Snow, from New Bedford, U. S. A."

"I am captain of this boat, the Dolphin, Frank Reade, Jr. I give you my compliments."

"The same to you. Will you not come aboard?"

"Aye, aye!"

Frank turned to Pomp and Barney and said:

"Get out the pontoon boat. We will pay Captain Uriah a visit."

CHAPTER IX.

THE VALLEY OF PEARLS.

Barney and Pomp were not slow in obeying this command.

The pontoon was quickly out of the cabin and the air-chambers filled.

Then all three took seats in it.

Stanhope was left aboard the Dolphin to look out for matters until their return.

Quickly the pontoon pulled over to the gangway of the Belden.

Then Frank mounted quickly to the deck, where he was met by Captain Snow.

Barney and Pomp were left in the boat to chat and gas with the sailors of the big brig, and they kept their end up well.

Captain Uriah Snow was a tall, shrewd-looking man of perhaps fifty years of age.

He shook Frank's hand warmly.

"I am glad to meet you, Captain Reade," he said; "pray come into the cabin."

"Thank you."

In the cabin, as usual, wine and the customary civilities were indulged in. Then Captain Snow said bluntly:

"Of course you must have some mission in this part of the world with your submarine boat, Mr. Reade?"

"I have accomplished it," said Frank.

"Indeed!"

"Success has been mine."

"You are fortunate. But what may your mission have been?"

Frank as briefly as possible told of the quest for the silver whale and the object therefor.

Snow listened with interest.

"Wonderful!" he cried, as Frank finished; "it is wonderful!"

Then he sprang to his feet and paced the deck excitedly. Frank was, of course, not a little surprised.

But Captain Uriah suddenly recollected himself and paused.

"Pardon me!" he exclaimed. "I was so deeply engrossed that I quite forgot myself. There is a matter upon my mind which I must broach to you. It is a great project, and I know I shall have your co-operation."

"Indeed!" was all Frank could say.

"No doubt I surprise you; but I am very much in earnest. It is a scheme which I have been some years in bringing about. But its safe consummation will certainly bring me a great fortune. This I will willingly share with you."

Frank was interested.

"I should be pleased to know of your project," he said.

"Good! I knew that I would get your interest. The fact that you have a submarine boat makes me feel perfectly sure of success."

"If I can help you in any way," said Frank, "I shall be very happy to do so."

"A thousand thanks. But now let me tell you my story.

"A dozen years ago I was upon the staff of a corps of naval engineers, sent by the Government to obtain soundings in these seas, and to make as accurate a survey as possible of the ocean bed at this point."

Frank nodded in reply. The subject was getting more absorbing.

"We made soundings," continued Captain Uriah, "and came in the course of our survey across a deep valley. At every rise of the sounding shaft there were brought up with the mud indications of a deposit of pearls of priceless value, as they were of the finest quality.

"We became satisfied that beneath us, and for the distance of a mile there existed a valley of pearls in which there lay a mighty fortune."

Frank gave a start.

"A valley of pearls!" he exclaimed. "That is indeed wonderful. I am much interested, Captain Snow."

"I knew that you would be. But to continue: As soon as the survey was completed of course our cutter was obliged to return home.

"We knew that we were leaving a mighty fortune behind us, but we could not help that.

"We were under orders and in the service of the United States Government. Our orders had been to make soundings and a survey and then to report at once at San Francisco.

"But, nevertheless, we took careful bearings, and felt sure that we could return to the exact spot at some future day.

"Best-laid plans often fail, however. Before we could reach San Francisco, we were overtaken by a terrible storm. The cutter was not exactly seaworthy, and had ought to have been condemned before the cruise began. She sprang a leak, and we were obliged to take to the boats.

"Myself and Lieutenant Fish were the last to leave the vessel.

"We were left only the captain's gig, but by the best of good fortune, it weathered the storm, and we were picked up four days later by a French brig.

"The other members of the cutter's crew were never heard from. They doubtless perished.

"Fish died in 'Frisco of the effects of our four days on the sea, and I was the only living person possessed of the knowledge of the locality of the valley of pearls and its bearings.

"For several years I drifted about, striving to get enough together to procure a ship and crew and come hither. I have at last secured this stanch vessel, and here I am."

Frank drew a deep breath.

"In what manner do you expect to recover the pearls?" he asked.

"Ah, that has been the problem," replied Captain Snow. "I have on board every sort of diving apparatus. But the depth is so great that I fear the risk of descending."

"An ordinary diving suit would never do," said Frank.

"But I have a plan for dredging. It is not of the most perfect kind——"

"Wait," said Frank, with resolution. "Set all your doubts at rest. I have a plan by which you can recover your pearls. If you will accept the offer I will place the Dolphin at your disposal."

A glad, eager cry escaped Captain Uriah's lips.

"That is grand!" he cried. "I had not dared to broach the matter to you. But I see that you are very kindly disposed to assist me. There is fortune enough there for many and all of us."

Frank made a deprecatory gesture.

"I care not for the fortune," he said; "but I am interested in your project and will gladly help you."

"A thousand thanks!" cried Captain Uriah, wildly; "the problem is then all settled. With your submarine boat it will be easy enough to recover enough of the pearls to satisfy us. I shall never forget this favor, Mr. Reade."

"Don't mention it," said Frank, politely. "Are we far from the locality of the pearl valley?"

"I believe we are not a dozen miles from the spot."

"Then let us locate it at once. If you will come aboard the Dolphin it shall be placed at your disposal."

"I will do so."

Captain Uriah hustled away to make provision. Soon he was at the gangway all in readiness with mining tools and two of his crew.

They entered one of the ship's boats and were rowed over to the Dolphin, as the pontoon was too light to hold them all.

It had been arranged that the Belden should hover about the vicinity for several days, or until the Dolphin should return from her submarine quest.

Then all went aboard the Dolphin.

Frank showed Captain Uriah over the boat, explaining to him its mechanism.

The old captain was more than interested. He was dazed.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed in a dreamy way, "I can hardly realize it all! It seems as if I must be in some other part of the world. I cannot understand it."

Then Frank pressed the lever which hermetically sealed doors and windows.

The Dolphin plunged beneath the surface. Down she went until the electric lights showed the gleaming sands of the ocean bed.

Then began the quest for the valley of pearls.

For fully a day the Dolphin cruised about. Then the electric light showed a half mile distant huge pillars of stone, showing the entrance to a submarine valley or sink.

The Dolphin approached this rapidly.

Reaching the huge pillars it passed between them. The valley of pearls was spread to view.

There they lay in heaps upon the bed of the valley. They glistened and shone in the electric light beautifully.

Truly it was a wonderful sight. Words cannot describe the keen joy of Captain Uriah.

He danced and sang and screamed in his delight.

"By the horn spoon!" he cried, "my fondest dreams are realized! Pearls, pearls, beautiful pearls! Truly they are gorgeous beyond all description."

Even the phlegmatic voyagers of the Dolphin, who had become hardened to the wonders of the sea, could not help but admire the display.

"Upon my word!" cried Stanhope, "I don't mind possessing a few of those gems myself."

The Dolphin was allowed to rest upon the bottom. Then Frank brought out some diving suits.

Captain Uriah wanted suits for himself and his men. Fortunately there were enough, and Frank did not demur.

It was arranged that they should go out and gather the richest of the pearls, and that they should return as soon as this was done.

None of the Dolphin's party decided to participate in the quest.

So donning the diving suits Captain Uriah and his men left the Dolphin.

It required some little time for them to get accustomed to the pressure of the water upon their helmets.

But they finally overcame this and began to mine for the pearls.

This was slow work and not altogether fruitful.

While there were thousands of the pearls upon the bed of the valley, only a few of them were fit to preserve.

Many were imperfect, many crumbled to powder, and only one in fifty was a perfect and valuable gem.

But there were, all the same, many rare, beautiful and

valuable specimens, and these Captain Uriah diligently searched for.

For hours the pearl miners worked, and with much success. Then suddenly Captain Uriah threw up his arms and fell in a heap.

Barney, who was in the pilot-house saw this, and gave a yell of wild alarm.

CHAPTER X.

THE STORM.

The Celt knew fully what was the trouble with Captain Uriah.

The pressure upon the helmet had lasted so long that faintness or syncope had descended upon the luckless man.

There was danger that he would die before he could be got aboard the Dolphin, and Barney realized this.

So he yelled:

"Misther Frank, for the love av Heaven, cum quick! Shure there's the divil to pay! The captain has been overcome, sor!"

Frank needed no second bidding.

Quick as a flash he rushed into the cabin. He sprang into a diving suit, locked the helmet with a click, set the generator going, and then sprang into the vestibule.

All this was done with great rapidity.

Then he opened the outer door and was in the sea.

The companions of Captain Uriah were staggering from the same cause.

They had been too long subjected to the pressure.

Frank motioned to them to go aboard the Dolphin instantly.

Then he sprang to Captain Uriah's side.

The captain lay partly upon his back, and Frank saw through the helmet window that his face was horribly distorted.

The young inventor instantly picked him up bodily and started for the Dolphin.

He reached the rail and dragged the overcome man into the vestibule.

It was but a moment's work to close the door and expel the water. Then Frank tore away the helmet clasps.

Captain Uriah was like one dead. But Barney had appeared on the scene instantly with a stimulant.

This was administered, and in a few moments all were overjoyed to see the old captain revive.

He opened his eyes and looked about him.

"It was a close call, my friend," said Frank, cheerily, "but we've pulled you through."

Captain Uriah remained in a sitting posture.

"What happened?" he asked, feebly.

"You were overcome," said Stanhope.

"Overcome?"

"Yes."

"How did that happen?"

"Why, you simply stayed out there in the water too long. The pressure was too great for a beginner like you."

Captain Uriah nodded his head slowly.

"Maybe you are right," he said. "But why didn't it affect the others so?"

"It did," replied Frank. "They have come aboard also."

"Ugh!" exclaimed the captain, struggling to his feet. "I'll be all right in a little while, but the pearls——"

"Are all safe," said Frank. "Pomp went out and got them."

This was true. While they were resuscitating the captain, Pomp had gone out and brought in the sack of pearls.

Captain Uriah was soon himself again, and a few hours later came into Frank's cabin.

He poured out a heap of pearls on the table, and said:

"Take such of them as you want, Frank."

"I don't want any," replied the young inventor. "I have no use for them, captain. I am a rich man, anyway. You must keep them yourself."

"Do you mean that?"

"Yes."

"But what will repay you?"

"I ask no pay. I am pleased to have been able to serve you."

"Well," said Captain Uriah, bringing his hand down on the table with a thump, "you are the biggest-hearted man I ever knew. Mark my words, before I die I will repay you!"

Frank laughed.

"Do not ever disturb yourself about that," he said; "it is all right. But how much longer will we remain here?"

"Not a minute!"

"What! Have you finished your work?"

"Every bit. I have got all the fortune I want right here."

Captain Uriah poured the pearls back into the bag. He turned to the door. Frank arose, saying:

"Then if you are all through we will go to the surface."

"That suits me."

The pearl-hunting expedition was over.

Captain Snow was now possessed of what he believed would make him a very wealthy man.

Naturally he was happy.

But he was not selfish. He intended that every member of his crew should have a fair share.

Frank sent the Dolphin to the surface at once.

But as she came up out of the water into daylight there was revealed to the crew a thrilling state of affairs.

A mighty yellow cloud hung from horizon to zenith, and was sweeping down into the east.

The sea was rough and tumbling in long and uneven billows. A heavy wind went soughing by.

A terrible storm was at hand. In fact a literal tornado threatened.

Far to the southward was a white sail.

That it was the Belden seemed a certain fact. Captain Uriah viewed the situation anxiously.

"I hope they will get down to bare poles before this blast!" he declared. "It is going to be a fearful one!"

"It is possible we can reach her before the storm comes on," said Frank.

"I wish we could."

"I will try."

Frank shouted to Barney to put on all speed. The Dolphin shot away over the waves like a meteor.

She was an extremely swift boat in any sea, and the heavy rollers did not disturb her.

On she ran like a bird.

The Belden was standing up to the wind with fore and main topsails so that Captain Uriah's mind was easy.

Yet he was naturally desirous of reaching the ship before the storm should strike her.

Every moment the Dolphin drew nearer. She was even sighted by the crew of the Belden.

The flash and report of a signal gun was heard.

"We shall make it!" cried Captain Uriah, excitedly. "You shall see!"

But even as the words left his lips there came a distant bellowing sound, a rumble like thunder, and then the storm burst.

It was a terribly grand moment.

It seemed literally as if all the elements had combined in one fearful effort to outdo pandemonium.

Rain fell in sheets; the sea ran mountains high and tossed the frail Dolphin about like an eggshell.

Frank saw that it was utterly impossible to reach the Belden.

He knew that the safety of his own boat depended upon prompt action.

So he opened the reservoir lever and let the boat go down.

One hundred fathoms beneath the surface the storm was not felt.

The Dolphin glided along slowly.

Captain Uriah was not a little worried about his ship.

"Have no fears," said Frank. "She will outride it, I know. Then we will find her safe enough."

"She will if the lubbers handle her right," declared the captain; "but I am afraid they won't."

At least it did no good to borrow trouble, and realizing this, the captain became more cheerful.

"What do you care?" said Stanhope. "You have a large fortune in pearls. You can buy many such ships."

Thus Captain Uriah was consoled.

The Dolphin cruised aimlessly about in the meanwhile.

The barometer yet showed that there was disturbance above, so those in the cabin of the Dolphin proceeded to make themselves easy until the storm should pass.

And now by way of diversion Barney and Pomp provided their quota in the line of a musical entertainment.

The Celt had a genuine Irish fiddle which he solemnly asserted had been in his family for ten generations.

"Shure, it's dearer to me than the apple av me eye!" he declared. "Didn't me ancistors play it in the coort av the Oirish kings afore iver England got her bould foot on the neck av ould Oireland!"

The amount of melody which Barney could evoke from that antiquated fiddle was indeed wonderful.

He could rattle off jigs, and play and sing ballads by the score.

His voice was a fine baritone, and he sang well.

Pomp, on the other hand, was provided with a fund inexhaustible of negro melodies savoring of plantation days.

He played the banjo and the bones, danced a clog dance and could sing in a full tenor voice.

They played and sang to the company until completely exhausted. Captain Uriah's sailors were particularly delighted and cheered them roundly.

Thus several hours were passed in the cabin.

Frank finally went to the barometer and cried, joyfully:

"The storm is over!"

"Hurrah!" cried Captain Uriah. "Let us go to the surface."

"Is it best?" asked the young inventor.

"Why not?"

"Darkness has come on."

This was true. With the going down of the storm had come night.

Those on board the Dolphin under the sea had no means of knowing this save by the chronometer.

Captain Uriah was thoughtful a moment.

Then he said:

"I think we had better, Frank."

"All right," agreed the young inventor. "It shall be so."

He touched the lever and the boat sprang upward.

Up, up, she went, and rose from the depths into the night air. Above was the moonlit sky. All around them was the storm-swept but calm sea.

Instinctively all looked for the lights of the Belden.

But even to the horizon they were not to be seen.

The ship must have been driven many miles from her course.

Here was a predicament. Captain Uriah was disposed to regard it seriously, but Frank said:

"I should not worry at all. There is not the slightest doubt but that she will return here. It is her best and only course."

"Certainly it seems so!" agreed the captain; "that is if those lubbers will have the good sense."

"But will they not? Have you not a competent crew?"

"I think so."

"Then do not worry any more about it."

All night long the Dolphin rocked upon the swelling but peaceful sea. All on board were very tired.

Barney kept watch the first of the night, and Pomp the latter part. At length daylight came once more.

And as the sun rose up out of the sea it revealed a surprising spectacle.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ISLAND—ON A REEF.

All night long Pomp had observed to leeward what he had regarded as a huge cloud bank.

But now, as daylight cleared away the mists, it was revealed as a very startling spectacle.

The cloud bank was extremely tangible, and was, in fact, nothing more nor less than a line of coast.

It extended for many leagues to the westward, and its rugged, high cliffs frowned most forbiddingly upon the heaving crests of the sea.

"Golly!" gasped the astonished darky, "dat jes' beat me all out. I jes' beliebe dat am an island."

The darky rubbed his eyes to make sure that his vision was clear. Then he muttered:

"I'se gwine fo' to call Marse Frank at once. It am drefful funny!"

The darky at once went rushing down into the cabin, shouting:

"Marse Frank, fo' de lan' ob massy sakes, cum quick! Wha' yo' fink we hab cum to, sah? It am lan', sah, jes' so suah as yo' am bo'n!"

Frank, somewhat startled, sprang up and rushed out on deck.

He saw the state of affairs at once. Pomp was right.

"An island!" he gasped. "It is not on any chart. How very queer!"

Pomp's cry had alarmed others of the crew. These now came rushing out to view the strange spectacle.

It was a forbidding coast, with rocky shores and high bluffs, against which the waves broke pitilessly.

So far as could be seen it furnished no harbor or refuge of any kind for a vessel. What its vegetable or animal life was it was not easy to guess.

A few waving pines were seen upon the cliffs, a few stunted trees of the deciduous order also.

"Well," muttered Captain Uriah in a mystified way, "where are we? I never remember of a charted isle in these seas!"

"We have then made a discovery," said Frank. "Perhaps an important one. Who knows?"

"Shall you go ashore?"

"I have a desire to; but first let us find the ship."

"Let us christen the isle as long as we are the discoverers!" cried Stanhope.

"All right!" agreed Frank and the captain in one breath. "What shall it be?"

"We will call it Pearl Island, as it was discovered so near the valley of pearls."

"Good!" cried Captain Uriah. "You have hit it."

"Begorra, I wudn't moind thryin a bit av a thramp on it mesilf," said Barney. "Shure, me legs are sthiff from the lack av exercise on shore."

"Golly, dat's right, I'ish!" cried Pomp.

"Rest easy," said Frank. "You shall have the chance. But first I must ease Captain Snow's mind."

"By no means," protested the captain. "If it is the disposition of the party, we will visit the isle first."

"No," cried Stanhope; "it is more important that we should find the Belden first of all."

Powerful glasses were brought into requisition, and the sea was scanned closely, but not the slightest speck could be seen.

It was reckoned that the Belden would be blown to the northeast, so it was decided to pursue the quest in that direction.

The Dolphin headed that way, which would carry it past the point of the island.

She had just got under headway and was leaving the isle to the eastward when a terrible thing occurred.

There was a sudden terrible jar, a jolt and a crash. Everybody on board was thrown from his feet.

The Dolphin was at a standstill.

It needed no further explanation to tell Frank Reade, Jr., the truth. He gained his feet and rushed to the rail.

The submarine boat had struck full head upon a reef!

She lay with the waves breaking over her bow.

How badly she was stove could not be seen.

Horror was upon the features of all as this dreadful realization burst upon them.

"My goodness!" cried Stanhope, in awful despair. "We are lost! This is the end of the Dolphin!"

"A sunken reef!" groaned Captain Uriah.

Frank Reade, Jr., said nothing. He was very pale but quite cool.

The Dolphin rocked and groaned some as the waves lifted her, and it was evident that the heavy sea would be most disastrous.

She must be got off at once or the result would indeed be serious.

Frank studied her position for some moments, and then said:

"Bring out the diving suit, Barney. I must make an examination."

"Do you think she can be got off, Frank?" asked Stanhope.

"I cannot say yet."

Barney hastened to bring up the diving suit. Frank put it on and then tied a rope around his waist.

By means of this he was lowered down into the water.

To the bottom he went, and at a point where he could see the position of the Dolphin well.

He carried a strong electric light in his helmet. With this he could see all objects about quite plain.

He carefully examined the position of the boat.

He saw that she rested upon a section of the jagged reef. The sharp rocks had punctured her outer shell near the bow, and she was held as in a vise.

Frank at once saw the futility of trying to draw her off.

Even if the power was at hand and could be employed, it would tear a terrible hole in her.

It certainly looked as if the Dolphin was a total loss.

A more disheartening reflection than this can hardly be imagined. Frank was quite discouraged.

However, he would not give up hope.

He continued his examination of the craft, and finally reached the conclusion that there was only one way in which the Dolphin could be saved.

It was a chance out of a hundred, but Frank decided to take it.

The section of reef had many cavities.

In the largest of these Frank believed a torpedo could be placed and exploded.

This would tear the reef to pieces and doubtless dislodge the Dolphin; but, of course, there was the chance of blowing a hole in her and instantly sinking her.

But even if she were safely dislodged, it was possible that the hole in her outer hull would cause her to take so much water that she would sink.

But the young inventor was determined to act, and accordingly sent up the signal to be drawn up.

In a few moments he was again on the deck of the Dolphin.

"Well, Frank, how is it?" cried Stanhope. "Are we lost or not?"

The young inventor shook his head.

"I cannot say yet," he declared.

He sent Barney into the cabin for a torpedo. A wire was attached to it, and once more Frank put on his helmet.

Again he went over the rail and down under the keel of the Dolphin.

He selected what he considered a suitable spot, and placed the torpedo in it.

Then he signaled to be drawn up again, and soon was once more on the deck of the Dolphin.

Removing his helmet, Frank said:

"I am going to explode a torpedo under this boat. It may dislodge her and it may sink her. If any of you fear the consequences you may go ashore."

"Is it the best thing to do, Frank?" asked Stanhope, anxiously.

"It is our only chance."

There was a moment of silence.

Captain Uriah finally said:

"I believe in sticking to the ship!"

"So do I!" cried Stanhope.

"Begorra, it's mesilf will niver go ashore," said Barney.

"I reckon if de ole boat go down I jes' go down wif it," averred Pomp.

The sailors from the Belden were of the same opinion. So Frank at once made connection with the dynamo.

As the explosion would be under the bow, it was deemed best to get as far away as possible.

So all went to the stern.

Frank waited for a moment when the boat was steady in its rocking. Then he pressed the electric key.

There was a sudden shock, a muffled roar, and the Dolphin heaved and pitched violently.

Then a great column of water shot up abaft her bows, and she was perceptibly lifted and hurled back.

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, with the wildest of joy. "She is off the reef!"

The others gave a great cheer. It was too good to believe.

But it was the truth, just the same. The Dolphin was off the reef.

Frank sprang into the pilot-house and pressed the motive lever. She backed away, and answered her helm readily.

For a moment the spirits of the voyagers were indeed high.

But as a thrilling event proved, this was premature.

Suddenly the Dolphin began to rock strangely, and a dull gurgling was heard under her bow.

Frank ran to the companionway that led down into her hold, and listened intently.

When he turned about his face was deadly pale.

"My God!" he gasped. "The Dolphin is doomed!"

"What!" cried Stanhope, in alarm. "Is she sinking?"

"She is making water fast!"

Consternation most profound seized the voyagers.

What did the future hold for them?

Luckily they were near land. But to be cast away upon a desert isle in this part of the world was by no means a pleasant thing.

The Dolphin was sinking beyond a doubt.

"What shall we do?" cried Stanhope. "Shall we leave her, Frank?"

For one swift moment the young inventor had thought of this. But now another plan came to him.

If the boat sank in that spot he knew she could never be redeemed. He looked toward the shore.

There was a little sandy strip of beach in a small cove.

Frank instantly seized the wheel. She would yet answer this, and he pressed the motive lever.

The Dolphin shot forward, headed directly for the island shore.

CHAPTER XII.

CASTAWAY—RESCUE.

Straight for the sandy beach she ran full speed.

Frank intended to beach her. This was not a difficult thing.

Her bows were not sharp and capable of gliding over a smooth surface. She struck the sand with a high-pitched bow.

This drove her half through the surf. The shock was tremendous.

There upon the sand lay the submarine boat. It was indeed a disheartening sight.

Every heavy breaker washed her stern and flooded her rails. A high sea would break over her.

Her end was assured.

She could never be floated from that position.

All that could be done was to get all portable and valuable effects ashore.

It was easy to leap from the bow down into the surf and wade ashore. Several did this.

Then a line was established, and the process of getting the effects ashore was begun.

In a short while there was a great heap of stuff on the island beach.

Provisions were there in plenty, and all portable effects that would be useful.

For hours the castaways labored thus. But ever and anon they cast anxious glances to the horizon line to look for some sign of the Belden.

But it did not appear.

This was their only hope, that they might be able to sight and hail the Yankee brig.

It was indeed a sad sight to see the Dolphin in its present position.

Such a triumph of inventive genius as it was, and to think that it must now be given up to decay!

It did seem altogether wrong. But there was no help for it. Perhaps the most philosophical of all was Frank Reade, Jr., himself.

"Never mind," he said. "I will get up something to beat her."

"You will do well if you do, Frank," Stanhope said.

But the young inventor only smiled. He knew his power well.

It was now in order for the castaways to make themselves as comfortable as possible and then explore the island.

There was a cavity in the cliffs which was sheltered from the elements, and into it Frank caused all the provisions to be carried.

A wide sheet of canvas kept off the raw east wind. Blankets were spread and couches made, and the castaways had soon made themselves quite comfortable.

Nightfall came, and Captain Uriah walked out on the beach sniffing the air, and said:

"I tell you, mates, we're going to have a blow within twelve hours."

"Do you believe it, captain?" asked Frank, anxiously.

"I do."

All eyes were at once turned upon the Dolphin.

There she lay, washed by the swell.

A beautiful wreck she was. It was like bidding farewell to a dying friend.

For all knew that the first storm would relegate the Dolphin to oblivion.

The wind certainly was shifting into the northeast, and it looked as if Captain Uriah's prediction would come true.

All retired early that night.

It was almost a sleepless night for most of the party. But toward morning a distant booming sound was heard.

Rain pattered upon the canvas which hung over the entrance to the cavity.

The storm had come.

The wind quickly freshened into a gale. It was barely daylight, but all arose and went out on shore.

The waves were growing mountain-like every moment.

And there they broke over the wreck of the Dolphin with thundering force.

They crashed down upon the steel decks, and raged and seethed and hissed furiously about their prey.

But all to no purpose.

The keen nose of the Dolphin, like that of some stranded monster of the sea, still held its position.

But before noon the incessant waves had carried away a portion of the port bulwarks.

This was the beginning of the end. From that moment the Dolphin broke up rapidly.

Soon little was left of her but a few of her steel ribs; much of the wreck was washed high upon the sands.

It was a sad party which sat on the storm-driven shore and watched the miserable demise of the famous submarine boat.

"It's too bad!" was all Stanhope could say.

He had carefully preserved the metal case containing the confession just the same.

It would no doubt be a long time, however, before he could make use of it.

Valentine Tucker must languish behind bars for some time yet.

Captain Uriah had taken good care to preserve his precious bag of pearls.

If he never left the isle they would of course be of little value to him. But he hoped to do this.

"I'll save them, anyway," he had declared. "If I ever get back to civilization the money will come handy."

Barney and Pomp were extremely disconsolate.

The loss of the Dolphin was to them a most serious matter.

"I done tell yo' we am gwine fo' to starve on dis yere old island!" affirmed Pomp, confidently. "I done feel it in mah bones."

"Begorra, it's an awful place to be found dead in!" declared Barney, moodily. "Be me sowl! I'm that lonesome I cud cry me eyes out!"

Two days slipped by.

The storm had drifted away to the eastward and was over. The sun once more shone out clear and bright.

This revived somewhat the drooping spirits of all, and Captain Uriah said:

"Suppose we set a signal flag for the Belden to see?"

It was certainly not a bad idea.

So a long pole was procured and upon it was nailed a huge square of canvas. This could be seen far out to sea.

Then faggots were collected with which to keep a beacon light at night.

If the Belden should come anywhere within range of the island it could not fail to be attracted.

But what Captain Uriah feared was that it would continue to cruise in the same limited area, and then after a disheartening period give up the quest and go back to San Francisco.

In that case they would be indeed badly off. Abandoned on a desert isle! What a fearful fate!

For days they climbed the cliffs and gazed seaward, hour after hour, in quest of the welcome sail.

But it came not.

Then a sort of grim despair began to settle down upon all. Some of them became taciturn and morose.

Finally one day Barney and Pomp came to Frank. Pomp said:

"If yo' please, sah, we am berry low on provisions. I done fink we hab got to fin' somefin' else to eat right away, sah."

"Bejabers, it's afther goin' huntin' we'll be," said Barney.

"Right," said Frank. "We will organize a party at once. Bring out the guns, Barney."

The Celt was only too ready to obey.

Anything which developed excitement was welcome, and he and Pomp were at once in gay feather.

They soon procured the guns and some ammunition, and the start was made.

Frank, with Barney and Pomp, as the most experienced hunters, led the way.

It was the first exploration of the island that had been made.

Straight for the interior Frank pushed.

As they went on, the land began to rise, and grew very rocky.

At length an elevation was reached from which a view of the whole island could be had.

It was seen to be completely barren and unproductive.

There was no natural fruit of any kind—not even a berry or a plum.

It was a desolate waste.

Truly, to be forced to confront the fact that they must live the rest of their lives upon this limited bit of barrenness was hard indeed.

"It makes a man feel blue," said Stanhope. "I almost wish I had stayed at home."

"By my honor! I wish I had!" agreed Captain Uriah. "Poverty at home is better than riches here."

"But we are here," said Frank Reade, Jr., pluckily. "And we must make the best of it."

"Oh, certainly," agreed Stanhope, readily. "I am not squealing, Frank. I took my chances and now I'll stand by 'em."

At this moment the report of a gun was heard at the edge of a small lake near.

Barney had fired into a flock of ducks and had killed three. Presently he came up with his prize.

"Begorra, it's a foine shot I med!" he cried. "I thried for one, and, be me sowl! hit tree av thim. Divil a bit betther cud any wan ask!"

Everybody laughed at this, and then all separated for the hunt.

There was no game upon the isle but birds. Beasts or animals of even the smallest order did not exist.

But ducks and geese were quite plenty.

A good bag of these was secured, and then the party returned to the camp under the cliff.

A fire was built and the game roasted. A hearty meal was partaken of, and then all sat down in a circle about the fire and told stories and cracked jokes until midnight.

Truly the life upon the isle was not without its bright side. How long it would last, however, it was not easy to say.

Several days more passed, and nothing worthy of note occurred.

Then Barney, strolling along the beach, made a surprising discovery. He saw imbedded in the sand what looked like an iron capstan.

He began to dig around it, and found that it was truly a capstan; also he traced in the sand the outlines of a vessel's hull.

It was no doubt the wreck of a ship which had come ashore here, and sank gradually beneath the level, owing to some quicksand formation.

Barney was busy with his examination, and was about to shout to his friends, when a thrilling thing occurred.

Suddenly he felt the sand give way and sink downward.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

Down out of sight Barney went like a flash.

As it happened, Pomp saw him disappear and set up a yell for help.

"Golly, de I'ishman am gone!" he screamed. "Come quick, Marse Frank! Cum everybody! He am done gone!"

Down Barney fell for several feet.

When he picked himself up he was astonished.

He was in the cabin of a ship.

Sand and debris were heaped upon the floor, and there was little left to show that it was really the cabin of a ship.

But such it was.

The Celt picked himself up to hear a voice above:

"Hi dar! Am yo' kilt, I'ish?"

"Divil a bit!" roared the Celt. "Cum down yersilf, naygur!"

But Pomp was satisfied with gazing down into the place.

"Fo' de lan's sake!" he gasped; "it am de cabin ob a ship!"

"Begorra, that's what it is!" cried Barney.

"Upon my word it is, Frank!" said Stanhope, who, with the young inventor, had come up just at that moment. "It is a sunken vessel!"

"Deeply sunk in the shoals!" said Frank. "Truly that is very odd."

All crowded about the cavity in the sand.

What was the name of the ship, and how long it had been in this position, it was not easy to guess.

But from what could be seen of the woodwork and the shape of the hull, it was evidently of a very antique pattern.

Doubtless it had lain there buried for a hundred years or more. What was the fate of its crew would never be known. Oblivion covered all.

Thoughts of this kind were surging through the mind of Frank Reade, Jr., as he stood there.

Who should say that they would not share the same fate as those castaways, and perhaps find a lonely grave upon the desert isle?

Some time strangers might come and ruminate upon their fate in precisely the same manner. It was a curious thing to ponder on.

But even as they stood thus engrossed around a headland of the isle there swung the hull of a ship.

Her sails filled lazily in the breeze as she rounded to an anchorage. The rattle of her chain was the first thing to apprise the castaways of her presence.

"Great Jericho!" gasped Captain Uriah.

Then he yelled at the top of his lungs:

"Ahoy! the Belden!"

The scene which follows baffles description. Barney scrambled out of his hole.

All rushed down to the water's edge insane with joy and excitement. A boat put out from the Belden.

Half an hour later all their effects were safe on board the big brig.

The great voyage of the Dolphin was ended. In one sense it was a great success.

The chief ends had been gained. The loss of the Dolphin was the dampening feature.

Two months later the Belden arrived in San Francisco harbor. A thankful crew disembarked.

Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp returned at once to Readestown, but before they left the Golden Gate, Valentine Tucker was set free and rejoined his happy family.

George Stanhope went back to Philadelphia, his home, happy as could be. As for Captain Uriah, his valuable pearls netted him a vast fortune. And so we write

THE END.

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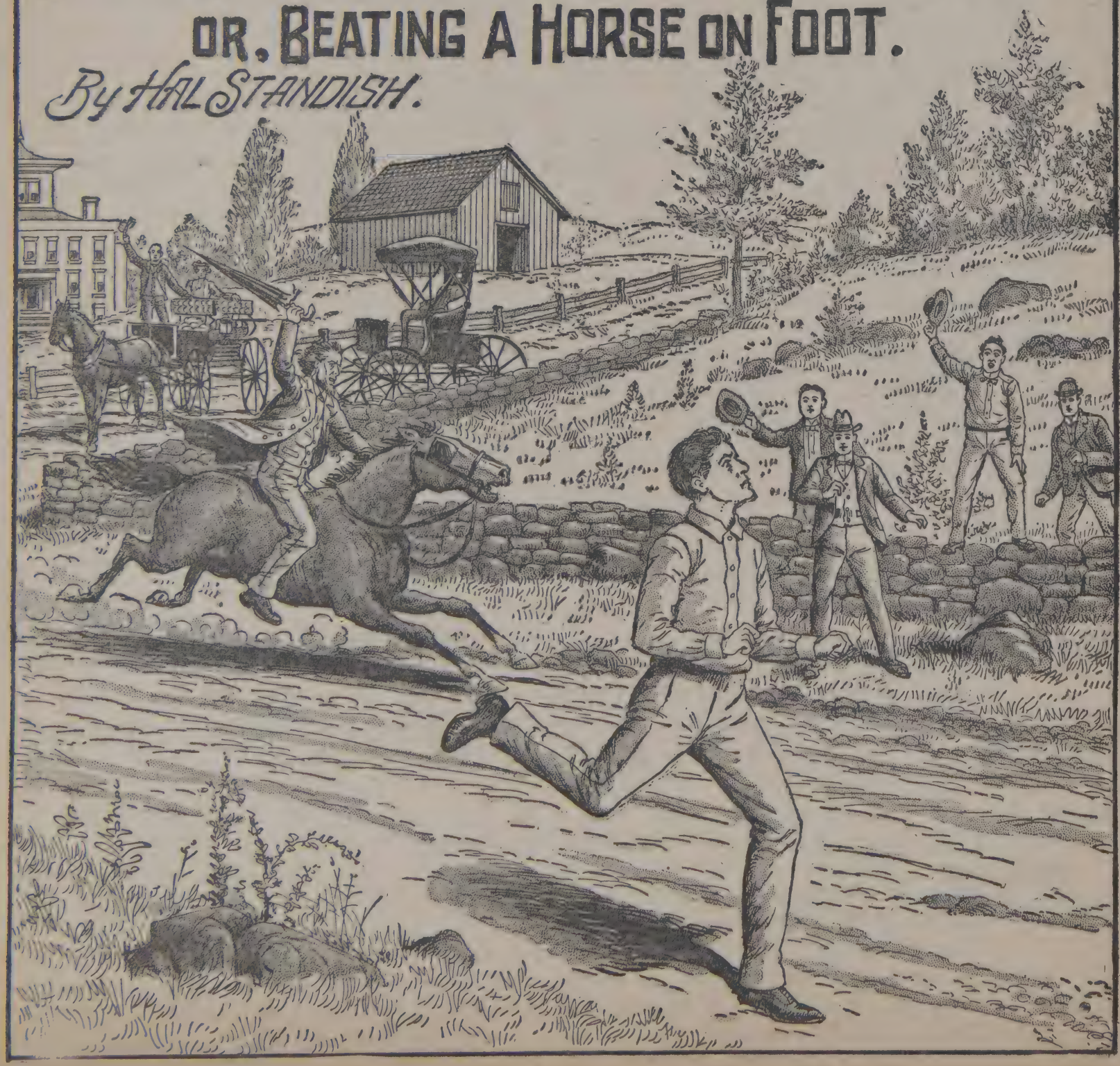

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